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RONALD J. DUNLAVEY

PRESIDENT FORD AND THE ETHNIC VOTE

ANNCR:

VOA NEWS ANALYST RONALD J. DUNLAVEY DISCUSSES THE BACKGROUND OF SOME REMARKS MADE BY PRESIDENT FORD TUESDAY TO AMERICANS OF EAST EUROPEAN DESCENT:

VOICE:

ON TUESDAY PRESIDENT FORD MET AT THE WHITE HOUSE WITH A GROUP OF PROMINENT AMERICANS OF EAST EUROPEAN DESCENT. HIS PURPOSE WAS TO CLARIFY THE CONTROVERSIAL REMARK HE MADE DURING LAST WEEK'S FOREIGN POLICY DEBATE WITH DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE JIMMY CARTER. DURING THAT DEBATE, WHILE ANSWERING A QUESTION ABOUT THE IMPACT OF THE HELSINKI AGREEMENT, MR. FORD STATED THAT "THERE IS NO SOVIET DOMINATION OF EASTERN EUROPE." THE PRESIDENT SAID QUITE BLUNTLY ON TUESDAY THAT HE HAD MADE A MISTAKE IN NOT EXPRESSING HIMSELF CLEARLY, THE COUNTRIES OF EASTERN EUROPE, HE SAID, ARE OF COURSE DOMINATED BY THE SOVIET UNION. BUT, HE ADDED, THE UNITED STATES WILL NEVER ACCEPT THAT DOMINANCE.

THIS STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT WAS ACTUALLY NOTHING MORE THAN A REAFFIRMATION OF LONG-STANDING AMERICAN POLICY TOWARD EASTERN EUROPE, AND NO ONE HAS INFERRED -- HOWEVER IMPRECISELY HE EXPRESSED HIMSELF DURING THE DEBATE -- THAT MR. FORD WAS INDICATING ANY CHANGE IN THAT POLICY. IT WAS A POLICY HE REASSERTED LAST APRIL IN ADDRESSING EAST EUROPEAN ETHNIC ORGANIZATIONS -- "TO SUPPORT THE ASPIRATIONS FOR FREEDOM AND NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE OF THE PEOPLES OF EASTERN EUROPE, WITH WHOM WE HAVE CLOSE TIES OF CULTURE AS WELL AS OF BLOOD, BY EVERY PROPER AND BY EVERY PEACEFUL MEANS."

A FEW DAYS LATER HE REMARKED, IN ADDRESSING THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF NEWSPAPER EDITORS: "WE BELIEVE VERY FIRMLY THAT THOSE EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES SHOULD BE INDEPENDENT; THEY SHOULD BE AUTONOMOUS. THEY SHOULD HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR COMPLETE AND TOTAL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH ALL COUNTRIES. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THEY SHOULD BE SUBJECTED TO SOVIET UNION DOMINATION. THEY SHOULD BE INDEPENDENT AND AUTONOMOUS."

ACTUALLY, THIS HAS BEEN STANDING AMERICAN POLICY FOR MANY YEARS AND THROUGH MANY PRESIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATIONS. AND OBVIOUSLY, MR. FORD WANTS HIS STATEMENT TO THE ETHNIC LEADERS TUESDAY TO BE SEEN IN THAT LIGHT.

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